hour's work of his generation seems most intelligent and ergo most intelligible. He has spent most of his time peering through optical devices and has painted constantly, never drawing people or things, though in geometry he liked to make A and B represent a lighthouse. Like the propositions of classical geometry, his painting will not give rise to controversy nor does it need that support.

11th Floor

On William T. Williams' floor one finds angry, uncanny fire, with fire's original sense of humor. And the fire is not always what it seems to be, as a burning tar pot at a distance looks like a million-dollar blaze and a fire in a refrigerator looks simple but blinds you. Most painting lacks the everyday "killer instinct," and this seems to be the thematic in his "Overskill" show, paradoxically putting the street in the gallery. It shows that when you are blinded, it is the everyday things which are hard. Williams rejects the manner of painting that reminds me of a young student's idea of diamonds on the moon: "like unspooled little pompons—I wouldn't want to wear them." He paints a formal and psycho-social allegory and his sculpture in metal and his cardboard and linoleum works come out of a ground of scars and flaws. "Suffering was for the '50s," however, and Williams is not inspired by the inevitably ridiculous frontal attack. He rejects moreover the fixed moment of Frank Stella, the moment when all rectangles meet and do not warp. Though one painting he has acquired is an Albers, he may set his own paintings on the floor. Landscape perspective being too easy as was the "anonymous edge of Kelly," what he loves are the subway posters of England, the African languages, the canon and durable art of Egypt. He would like to teach color by rearranging the Metropolitan's collection so that a funeral stele might be placed on linoleum, and he can envisage his own art placed in various contexts, as in barber shops or laundromats, unframed. He does not employ the jeweler's rouge that removes all scars. His works in a park uptown have swiftly become real targets for children. His watercolors too evolve powerfully, with an archaistic geometry of phallic sunrays. He is a most ingenious juggler with compressed space, calm as the architect who collapses the house floats, and he says, "Earth works were done by slaves who later became Baptist ministers and wrote essays about numerical symmetry."

Williams has a true predecessor in the Pyramids, the Pyramids being furniture that lasts. When questioned about Information Art, he told Continued on page 85
randomly selected color through a fabric screen of various dots on already wet and receptive other fabrics (in this case cotton duck) makes for a kind of tough choosing that only such a sensibility can pull off. The pictures are so new and mysterious that only intuition tells me this down home brother has it in his hands, his mind, his psyche. His mind reading back to me is laughter. His very body action makes everything without a mistake, even though painting is full of mistakes.

Dan Johnson’s work is, he says, in transition. He is under no illusion as to what it is he is doing. His sculpture may be a spectator sport, but his commitment is without question. His position in the community is easily consistent with his status as a kind of Ebony magazine STAR, emerging into a larger society. It’s more than Bill Bojangies Robinson tapping out and shuffling the Star Spangled Banner at a party for President Nixon... or Larry Rivers’ arrogant remark about “a better life for black people with the emergence of people like William Williams...” If River’s remark has any truth or meaning, it is only true in my opinion for Dan Johnson, who is a magic man and should be Mayor of Soho, at least.

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me that George Washington Carver was the greater concept artist and the peanut his concept, and what better than Carver’s landscape architecture? Williams’ early works were prodigiously eclectic, with roiled stainings and abrupt rectangularities. He was not to remain interested in the velocity of the brushstroke, but has been impelled to a more Léger-like murialism, an undemanding, populist vulgar, jazz as in Miles not Stuart Davis, with a strong center if less energy about the edges. The name of Williams’ Great Dane is Indigo, living with the painter and never discussing his works, that might be accused of being too taut, too aggressive, too maximal, but they are fugues with flash, deriving in an interesting way from the depth of Moholy-Nagy and Abers at Yale (where Williams studied) into the horrible green light of the street. The painting does not fall apart like a feather, nor does it stain after the political in listless stories, though the loops, pyramids and seeming question marks look hemmed-in and anxious, circumstances of the composition seem to force the elements to restrain their desires. It is a painting of viable, marked conflict. The relations in the works are demanding relations, offending relations. There is not a smooth run on the canvas but interruptions by textures that glit the bounce, sequin textures, for instance. These unmitigated compositions are only slightly suppressed by an unaccelerated perspicuousness. Even the simple and almost Caro-like sculpture of a pig trough, executed for the John de Menil, registers as a vehement weight, as if it says, “If Eliason was a prophet, Baldwin a Parish priest and Leroi Jones manipulated by media, then am I a little dot?” Here is an infuriated if austere self-laceration, as in his use of glittery clouds of sequins upon cheap rose-patterned linoleum; it does not allude to O’Keeffe but keeps its own cloudy sublime of the wretched.

His series, with their sunrays and combinations of Seals of Solomon and Pyramids with blue Niles pouring through them, stand as the painter would have them stand, like a chorus of arias by Bojangies. The Star of David and the Egyptian tomb interlock and warp once more. There is motion in Williams’ painting as much as Maybridge and the closed fist of an abstract symbolism. The motifs may be unraveled, as a pentacle may be a spinning-top, but the intimate rage is always veiled. As in the American Indian and African art, whose magical marks and spiritual politics he loves, his narrative and formal parts interact “in a knowable manner,” but the sum total, he feels, “is not knowable.” It is not modules, but an unpredictable art like the cat “who could pee anywhere at any time.” The paintings are pregnant, filled with almost hormonal activity, with a preference for violet not the expansive yellow that might eat into the outlines. The
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